

THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

12 January, 1985

# Analyst tells 'deceit' on troops

By Michael Coakley  
Chicago Tribune

**NEW YORK**—A former CIA intelligence analyst testified at the CBS libel trial Thursday that he had decided by late 1967 that the estimates of communist troop strength published by Gen. William Westmoreland's Vietnam command were a "monument of deceit."

**A** Samuel Adams, who served as a consultant to the network in preparing its controversial 1982 documentary on the war, explained that his investigation of the enemy's forces had convinced him that it was about twice the size of the 280,000 stated in Westmoreland's estimates during the months leading to the communists' Tet offensive of January, 1968.

In its broadcast, CBS asserted that purposeful undercounting of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units by the general and his senior staff had left President Lyndon Johnson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff unprepared for the all-out Tet campaign.

**CONTENDING THAT** he was defamed by that accusation, Westmoreland responded to the documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," by filing a \$120 million libel suit against the network.

Adams, one of the defendants in the case, was a primary source of information for the program and helped CBS obtain interviews with other former CIA officials and military intelligence officers who could support the central allegation of deception.

Dressed in the same rumpled tweed jacket that has become his trademark during the marathon trial, the 51-year-old descendant of President John Adams insisted that meticulous field research and his reading of a "mountain" of cap-

tured communist documents had led him to his conclusion about Westmoreland's command. Adams accused the command of placing an artificial ceiling of 300,000 on the number of enemy soldiers that would be included in the official estimates during the fall of 1967.

In its documentary, CBS charged that Westmoreland managed to protect that ceiling by arbitrarily dropping entirely from the count one category of Viet Cong troops, the village-based self-defense forces.

**IN HIS** lengthy testimony earlier, Westmoreland, 70, said he had decided to excise the self-defense units because they were composed primarily of poorly armed old men, boys and women who posed "no significant military threat."

To have continued including them in the estimates, the retired four-star general argued, would have misled policymakers in Washington. Sharply challenging Westmoreland's assessment, Adams responded at length to numerous questions on the home guards posed by CBS attorney David Boies.

Recalling a 1966 tour he made of a U.S. military hospital in central South Vietnam, Adams said he was told that most of the soldiers at that facility had been wounded by mines and other booby traps planted by the self-defense units.

After that visit and other research, he said he determined that the self-defense units were responsible for about one-third of American casualties in South Vietnam.

**ADAMS' OPINION** of the self-defense troops was supported strongly by the witness whose testimony preceded his own Thursday morning. Thomas Becker, who had served as a CIA analyst in Vietnam in 1967, characterized the threat posed by the home guards as "very significant."

While praising Adams as "one of the best analysts at CIA headquarters," Becker, whose testimony was given in a deposition and read aloud in court by an attorney, criticized Westmoreland's command for having "woefully understated" every category of communist forces.

With Adams' direct testimony set to continue when the trial reconvenes on Monday, the outcome of the trial could well hinge on the jury's reaction to this central figure in a complex legal drama.

Westmoreland's lawyers have sought to portray the energetic Harvard graduate as a man "obsessed" with proving an invalid theory on why Westmoreland's troop figures were not higher.

**A CBS OFFICIAL**, in turn, has described Adams as a genuine patriot who, despite the damage it could cause his career, refused to compromise his integrity.

The witness was the picture of calm self-confidence on the stand Thursday as he turned to face the jury directly, gesturing freely and jocularly referring to the Viet Cong as "the bad guys." Questioned by Boies on his background, Adams explained that he had served in the Navy in the early 1960s.

On his judgment of Westmoreland and how it evolved before the Tet offensive, he said he had decided by late 1967 that the general's undercounting of the enemy was willful and likely to jeopardize many American soldiers.

When the Tet offense erupted on Jan. 30, 1968, Adams said, he immediately resigned from the director's staff at CIA headquarters. The phrase "mountain of deceit" referring to Westmoreland's command was included in his resignation letter, he said.